Teaching Writing and Grammar

**2011 FULBRIGHT
PRE-DEPARTURE ORIENTATION
FOR ENGLISH TEACHING ASSISTANTS
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Teaching Writing

- Permanence: After writing is "delivered," the writer loses the ability to amend, clarify, and withdraw
- Production time: Writers can learn to produce their best work within available time limits
- Distance: Writers must anticipate their audience, predict their knowledge, etc., and see their writing from the audience's perspective and likely interpretation

Characteristics of Written Language

- Orthography: Students must master English lettering system, including acceptable handwritten (not typed) form
- Complexity: Students need to know how to use English vocabulary, grammar, syntax and rhetorical style in an appropriate manner
- Formality: Difficult and complex constructions occur in written form and must be able to describe, compare, explain, defend, criticize, and argue

Characteristics of Written Language

- Imitative: Beginning students practice writing down/copying letters, words, sentences
- Intensive/controlled: Little creativity on student's part
  - Change particular structure (present to past)
  - Responding to series of questions
  - Dictation
- Self-writing: Note-taking, journal writing

Classroom Writing Performance

- Display writing: Short answer, essays, reports display writing skills and techniques
- Real writing: Highlights genuine communication with audience
  - Writing for classmates/peer editing
  - Occupational/real-world tasks (applications)
  - Social tasks (letters, emails, diaries, messages)

Classroom Writing Performance

- Produce letter and spelling patterns
- Write at a speed acceptable to the task
- Produce an acceptable core of words and word order patterns
- Use acceptable grammar patterns and rules (tense, agreement, pluralization)
- Express meaning in a variety of grammatical forms

Writing Microskills

- Use cohesive devices in written discourse
- Use rhetorical forms and conventions
- Accomplish communicative functions according to purpose
- Develop and use writing strategies
  ◦ Assess audience
  ◦ Prewriting techniques
  ◦ Writing drafts fluently
  ◦ Use peer and instructor feedback for revising and editing
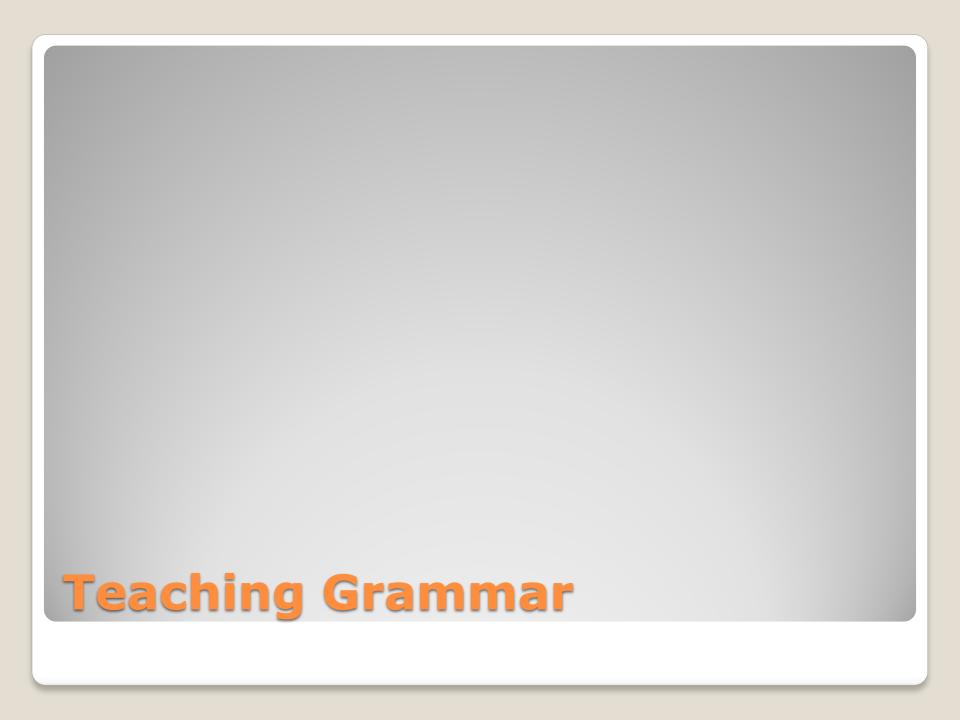
Writing Macroskills

- Highlight practices of "good" writers
  - Focus on a goal or main idea
  - Gauge the audience
  - Engage in planning to write
  - Let initial ideas flow onto paper
  - Follow general organizational pattern
  - Solicit and utilize feedback on their writing
  - Revise willingly and efficiently
  - Make multiple revisions if necessary

Principles for Teaching Writing

- Balance process and product
  - Lead students through composing process directed toward effective end product
- Account for cultural/literary backgrounds
  - Students need to be introduced to and practice English rhetorical conventions
- Connect reading and writing
  - Reading and studying relevant text types provides insights into conventions as well as provides background content

Principles for Teaching Writing

- Provide authentic writing
  - Make purpose clear, audience specified, and intent to convey meaning. Sharing with classmates adds authenticity
- Utilize interactive techniques
  - Pair/group work, learner centered, collaboration
- Be selective and sensitive in responding to and correcting students' writing

Principles for Teaching Writing

- Emphasize stages of prewriting, drafting, and revising
  - Prewriting
    - Outside reading, research
    - Brainstorming
    - Listing
    - Clustering
    - Discussing
    - Freewriting

Principles for Teaching Writing

- Emphasize stages of prewriting, drafting, and revising
  - Drafting/Revising
    - Getting started/topic selection
    - Peer-reviewing
    - Read-aloud
    - Instructor feedback
    - Proofreading

Principles for Teaching Writing

Teaching Grammar

- Inductive or deductive?
  - Learners discover rules and generalizations, or are presented via teacher/textbook
    - <u>Inductive</u>: Aligned with natural language acquisition; allows learners to learn at their own pace (developmental stage); provides a communicative "feel" without rule overload; may be more intrinsically motivating

    - <u>Deductive</u>: Keep explanations brief and simple; use charts and visuals to depict grammatical relationships; Illustrate with clear examples; allow for differences in cognitive styles; don't get distracted by exceptions; if you don't know, look it up!

Issues in Teaching Grammar

- Charts: Useful for practicing patterns, clarifying relationships
- Objects: Hands-on stimulation to engage students in communication
- Maps & drawings: Practical, simple
- Dialogs: Provide contextualized practice
- Written texts: Provides a discourse context

Techniques in Teaching Grammar